

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240427

Location: Two Trees Rhododendron Avenue Meopham Gravesend

Description: Erection of single storey rear extension with chimney and rooflights; dormer extension in rear roof slope; front porch; outbuilding at the rear; and installation of rooflights in front roof slope.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Watts

Site Visit Date: 16 April 2024

Submitted Documents/Plans

Householder Application for Planning Permission form;
Drawing no. PL-133-01 Existing elevations, layouts, site location and block plans;
Drawing no. PL-133-02 Rev. A Existing outbuilding layouts and elevations;
Drawing no. PL-133-10 Proposed elevations, layouts, sections and overlay of neighbouring property;
and
Drawing no. PL-133-10 Rev. B Proposed elevations, layouts and sections.

Superseded Documents/Plans

~~Drawing no. PL-133-10 Proposed elevations, layouts and sections.~~

Procedural issues

Following discussions with the case officer, the height of the proposed rear extension was reduced, two existing outbuildings were shown to be removed, the first floor layout was amended and a replacement single storey outbuilding was proposed to be constructed. As such, the description of the development was amended from 'Erection of single storey rear extension with chimney and rooflights; dormer extension in rear roof slope; front porch; and installation of rooflights in front roof slope.' To that shown at the start of this report. Because the proposed amendments were not material alterations, no additional publicity or consultation was undertaken.

It should be noted that the original submission contained two versions of drawing no. PL-133-10. One showing the proposed elevations, layouts and sections and one showing the proposed elevations, layouts, sections and an overlay of a neighbouring property. Following the amendments to the proposal, drawing no. PL-133-10 still shows the original proposed layout and elevations with an overlay of a neighbouring property and drawing no. PL-133-10 Rev. B shows the amended proposed elevations, layouts and sections. An amendment to drawing no. PL-133-10 has not been sought as it is for information purposes only.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
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20240101	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of erection of dormer in rear roof slope; single storey rear extension with chimney; pitched roof over existing porch; and rooflights in front roof slope.	Certificate refused	23.04.2024
20040722	Erection of a detached double garage at the front and variation of condition (9) of planning permission reference number GR/1997/741 (for the erection of the bungalow) to allow the caravan to be retained on the site and used for residential purposes after the bungalow is occupied, for a temporary period of 12 months.	Permitted	30.03.2005
19980615	Variation of conditions 3 and 7 of planning permission ref no. GR/97/741 to allow extension of the roof over the north west corner of the building and alterations to various windows including installation of velux windows in roof slopes, additional window in front elevation, installation of new windows, including a semi-circular window in rear elevation and installation of semi-circular window in north side elevation.	Permitted	19.11.1998
19970741	Erection of detached bungalow and formation of vehicular access.	Permitted	24.03.1998

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites
- C13 – Extensions to dwellings in the countryside

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015)
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Meopham Parish Council

We would refuse this proposal on the grounds of overdevelopment in the greenbelt relative to the original size of the property and impact on the sloping rear landscape.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to two neighbouring properties by letter. Two representations have been received and are summarised as follows;

- Supports the proposal.
- The proposal would improve the presentation of the house and be in keeping with its neighbours.
- The rear extension would not be visible from the road.
- The proposal would not affect anyone in the area.

Officer's Analysis

The application site lies within the Green Belt, outside the village of Culverstone Green, which is a rural settlement, inset from the Green Belt and identified on the Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map. The site falls within an area known as the Culverstone Valley Area. While this area has always been subject to Green Belt policy, up until 2014 development within the area was considered against a specific area policy, Policy C14 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review. Policy C14 and the associated Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Culverstone Valley Area were withdrawn following the adoption of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, on the recommendation of the Examination Inspector. From this point onwards, development in this area has been considered against national and locally adopted Green Belt policy, in the same way as other areas within the Borough that lie in the Green Belt.

Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy.

Therefore, the principle issues in the determination of this application are;

- Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?
- Effect on the character and appearance of the area - including landscape character
- Other matters

Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

Paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF 2023) sets out that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence and paragraph 143 lists the five purposes that the Green Belt serves. At the application site, the Green Belt assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF 2023 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special

circumstances.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt but it lists certain exceptions. These exceptions are set out in sub-paragraphs 154(a) to 154(g). Sub-paragraph 154(c) identifies the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994) relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. It sets out a number of criteria that should be met when considering proposals for domestic extensions. As the policy pre-dates the NPPF 2023, the weight attached to the policy must be considered carefully; with greater weight being given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023.

In particular Saved Policy C13 places an overall limit on extensions of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling unless the increased floor space has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling (criteria (ii)). It also requires the massing, scale and form of any extension to be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting (criteria (vi)). It is considered that these factors are relevant in determining whether the size of an extension is proportionate and as such, these aspects of the policy are broadly in line with the NPPF 2023 and should be afforded weight.

A recent decision at no. 42 Beechwood Drive (reference APP/K2230/D/23/3326603 dated 13 February 2024), is relevant. Here, the Inspector stated that;

“The GLPFR pre-dates the Framework’s publication and, through applying restraint upon development in the Green Belt, Saved Policy C13 appears broadly consistent with the Framework and thus should be afforded considerable weight.”

Regard should also be had to an emerging policy in the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020), Proposed Policy GB 5 Extensions, Replacement Buildings and Ancillary Development in the Green Belt. In relation to extensions, this policy reads as follows;

Proposed Policy GB 5 Extensions, Replacement Buildings and Ancillary Development in the Green Belt

Extensions

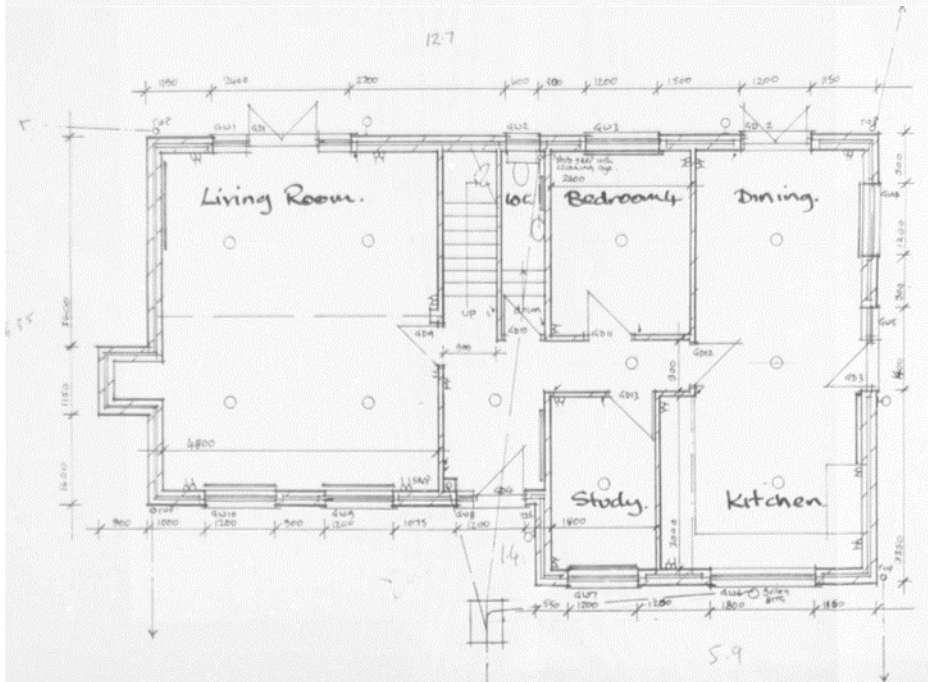
- 3.6.12. Proposals for the extension of an original buildingⁱ in the Green Belt will only be permitted where the extension will not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building unless justified by very special circumstances that clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm. The following will be taken into account in determining whether the proposal is proportionate:
- its footprint, floorspaceⁱⁱ and volume compared to the original building;ⁱ and
 - whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building;ⁱ
- 3.6.13. In addition to the above, Core Strategy Policy CS19 will be applied to determine whether the design of any proposed extension is appropriate, having regard to the presence of any existing extensions and outbuildings, prominence and visual impact of the proposal.

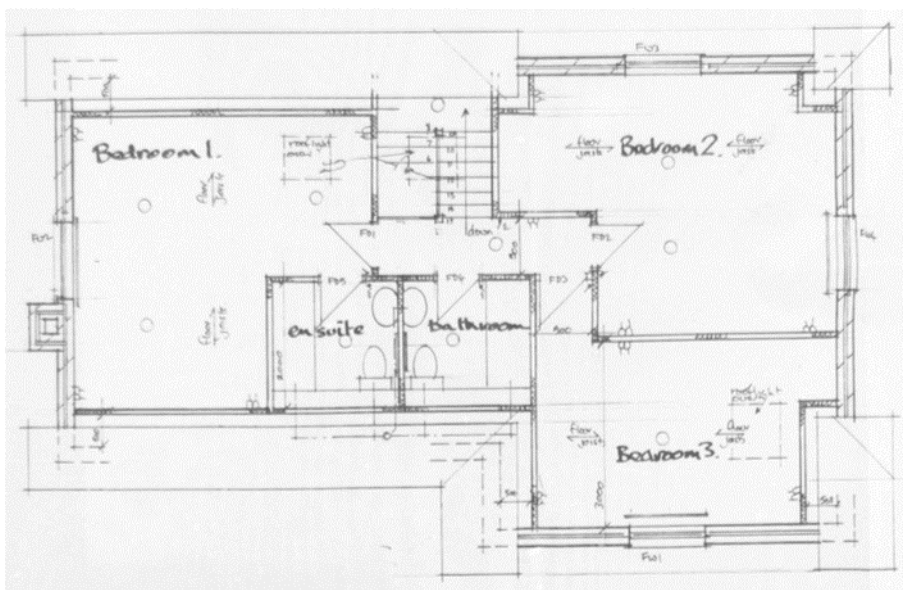
It is noted that as an emerging policy, the weight attached to it is very limited but it does illustrate the Borough Council’s intended approach to the assessment of green belt extensions.

The original building, for the purposes of assessing whether the proposed development is a

[illegible]

Under planning permission reference 19980615 the application property was extended by an addition to the roof. The permission allowed the habitable use of the roofspace, i.e. it created a usable first floor area. The following are images of the approved drawings;





This extension added 83 square metres floor space to the application property (not footprint) and was an 88% increase in floor area above the original building, utilising the roof space. However, it is noted that the majority of the new floor area was contained within the original roof volume, with the building footprint unchanged from original. The bulk of the building was slightly increased by the addition of a pitched roofed, gable end on the northern side of the roof.

In March 2005 planning permission was granted for the erection of a detached garage at the front of the application site (reference 20040722). The approved garage has subsequently been extended into the roof space and converted into living accommodation over two floors. The floor area of the garage is 56 square metres.

In addition, there are two outbuildings located in close proximity to the dwelling. The outbuilding on the northern side has a floor area of 11 square metres and the outbuilding on the southern side has a floor area of 14 square metres (this floor area does not include an open lean to construction).

It should be noted that there is case law (most notably *Sevenoaks District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and Dawe* 1997 and more recently *Warwick DC v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities* 2022) which establishes that a domestic outbuilding may be regarded as an extension to a dwelling provided that it forms a 'normal domestic adjunct'. In considering whether a proposal is considered to be a normal domestic adjunct, consideration is given to location and use in relation to the main dwelling.

The use of the outbuildings at the application site are currently as habitable accommodation (former garage), as a utility area with a washing machine (outbuilding on the northern side) and as a shed (outbuilding on the southern side), which would be ancillary and incidental to the use of the main dwelling.

All the outbuildings have a close physical and functional relationship to the main dwelling. As such, they are considered to be normal domestic adjuncts and constitute extensions to the dwelling at the application site. Therefore, the floorspace of these buildings would be included in the assessment of whether the proposal constitutes a disproportionate addition to the original building.

The garage has a floor area of 56 square metres and the rear outbuildings have cumulative floor areas of 25 square metres, which amount to an 81 square metre or 86% increase above the original building.

The proposed development would add a rear dormer extension in the rear roof slope and a single storey rear extension which would amount to 60 square metres of new floor area or a 64% increase above original. To assist in limiting the built development immediately surrounding the property, the proposed development involves the removal of two existing outbuildings (located at the side/rear of the dwelling) and

the erection of a replacement outbuilding to the rear of the dwelling. The new outbuilding would have a reduced floor area of 11 square metres.

When the floor area of the existing extensions (minus the floor area of the outbuilding to be removed) is taken into consideration, the cumulative increase in floor area (footprint and floor space) above the original building would be 210 square metres or 223% increase above original.

As a general rule (and in line with Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)), the Borough Council considers that extensions which exceed the overall floor area of an original building by one third (33%) or more, are likely to be disproportionate additions. However, it is acknowledged that floorspace is only one measure of such impact and in coming to a conclusion on this issue, the Council has regard to a range of other factors including footprint, floorspace, volume, scale, mass and height (in line with Proposed Policy GB 5 of the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020)).

The cumulative increase in floor area proposed would be in excess of the one third limit set out in Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994. However, it is noted that a significant proportion of the existing increased floor area is in the roof of the property did not add to the external size/volume of the building (as it was within the existing roof space). Furthermore, the proposed increase to the footprint of the dwelling resulting from this application, would only be some 55 square metres or 59% above the original. Lastly, the proposed dormer extension would only add around 16 cubic metres of volume to the roof. Therefore while it is acknowledged that the property has been extended significantly from its original form, the alterations proposed as part of this application are relatively modest and limited to the footprint, bulk and massing, such that a refusal is not considered defensible at appeal.

Importantly, the proposed increase in bulk and massing would be located at the rear of the building and would be seen in the context of the existing large rear gable. In addition, the proposed removal of an outbuilding located on the northern side of the building would reduce the impression of built development across the plot, by narrowing the built form.

It is acknowledged that the proposed development, by its nature as new built form, would erode openness and therefore would be detrimental to the Green Belt in spatial terms. However, due to its location at the rear of the building and in a plot that is surrounded by mature trees and vegetation, the proposed development would not be widely visible from any public vantage points. Therefore, the visual detriment to the openness of the Green Belt would be limited.

It should be noted that Meopham Parish Council considers the proposal to be an overdevelopment in the Green Belt relative to the original size of the property. However, for the reasons given above, it is considered that, by virtue of an assessment of floorspace, volume, scale, bulk, massing and design, the proposed development would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

It should also be noted that a very similarly sized and proportioned rear extension has recently been granted planning permission at Poplars, no. 99 Rhododendron Avenue (reference 20210227).

Overall, the proposal would be appropriate development in the Green Belt and in line with Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and paragraph 154(c) of the NPPF 2023.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

The application site is located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the Meopham Downs LCA adjoins the rear boundary. As such, Policy CS12 of the Local Plan Core Strategy is relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications.

According to the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, the Harvel Wooded Downs LCA is characterised by varied topography with steep valley sides and plateaux. Ancient woodland, chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pastures can be found. Views both within and out of the character area are limited because of the combined effect of topography and the heavily wooded character of the landscape.

The Meopham Downs LCA is characterised by a mixture of grazed pasture and arable land, with field shape and size being varied because of the topography of the area. Tree belts and native hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees form distinct boundaries.

It is noted that the application site is located in a rural area that has been somewhat urbanised and the residential nature of the application site would be retained. The proposed development would result in an increase in the size and bulk of the application property, but would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot, with the demolition and relocation of two outbuildings to one. The proposal would not be harmful to overall landscape quality in the immediate area. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to landscape character.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding local area. In particular, the design of new development should be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area.

In relation to single storey rear extensions, the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) sets out that they should not dominate the original property in terms of depth (extensions to extensions will not generally be supported); they should not rise above the window cill level of any first floor windows; they should not be excessive in height, especially where they are greater than three metres in depth; or excessive in width (no greater than the original building). Flats roofs can be acceptable where they are not widely visible and pitched roof designs should reflect the main roof.

In relation to rear roof extensions, the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) sets out that proposals should be set away from the gables, hips, eaves and ridge of a property; be lower than the existing ridge line and retain the original ridge line treatment; that dormers should not overwhelm the roof slope within which they are placed; and that windows should reflect the position, design and character of existing windows on the host building.

The area surrounding the application site has a variety of dwellings in different types and styles and with a variety of external facing materials. Surrounding properties have been subject to numerous extensions and alterations. The proposed development would be subservient in size to the existing dwelling and be of a design and materials that would match with the existing building. The proposed dormer would not overwhelm the existing roof and would have appropriate fenestration and the proposed extension would have a crown roof, which would reduce its size and bulk and the windows would match existing.

Overall, the proposed development would be appropriate in terms of design and would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of existing building or the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014 and the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021).

Other matters

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants. In this regard, the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) are relevant.

The proposed development would provide good living conditions for future occupiers (with bedroom sizes that comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards 2015) and sufficient garden area and depth would be retained to comply with the Borough Council's Residential Layout Guidelines 2020.

Overall, the proposal would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of future occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, the Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 and the Residential Layout Guidelines 2020.

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of neighbouring occupiers. In this regard, the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) are relevant.

The closest residential properties to the application site are Hens Roost and Woodcroft, Rhododendron Avenue (located to the north and east respectively).

Due to the design of the proposed development, to the screening provided by boundary treatments and to the layout and orientation of the surrounding properties, there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts to the occupiers of the surrounding dwellings.

No objections have been received, but letters of support submitted.

Overall, the proposed development would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Parking and Highways

Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994 require new development to mitigate its impact on the highway and public transport networks and to provide sufficient parking in accordance with adopted parking standards.

The application property has three bedrooms and on-site parking for numerous vehicles (on an existing gravel driveway). The proposed development would not increase the number of bedrooms at the application site but a proposed ground floor study would have sufficient floor area to be used as a bedroom. Therefore, the application property could have four bedrooms in future.

For a four or more bedroom property, the adopted Vehicle Parking Standards require a maximum provision of three parking spaces, which are already available at the application site.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would make sufficient provision for the parking of cars within the site in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards and would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located within an area of multi-period archaeological potential and Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3. However, as the proposed development is within the confines of an existing residential garden and only a relatively small amount of groundworks would occur, then it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to groundwater or archaeology. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Public Right of Way reference NS293, runs along the frontage of the application site. However, as the

proposal constitutes an extension to an existing building, that is located at the centre of the application site, it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to the alignment or to the use of the Public Right of Way.

It is noted that drawing no. PL-133-10 shows the original proposed layout and elevations with an overlay of a neighbouring property. An amendment to this drawing has not been sought as it is for information purposes only. A condition can be attached to any planning permission granted to clarify that the proposed development should be erected as shown on drawing no. PL-133-10 Rev. B and not as shown on drawing no. PL-133-10.

Suggested Conditions

Time Limit

Development in accordance with the approved plans

Materials to match existing

Removal of existing outbuildings prior to first occupied

New outbuilding to be used for incidental purposes only

Built in accordance with drawing no. PL-133-10 Rev. B and not drawing no. PL-133-10

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal would comply with local and national planning policies and subject to the conditions set out above, the proposal would be acceptable.

Planning permission subject to conditions is recommended.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	30th July 2024	Dated:	02 August 2024